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Brown: Beverage Container & Recycling Task Force Goes the Distance

Final hearing in Sault Ste. Marie – Sen. Allen welcomes task force to Upper Peninsula

FRIDAY, July 25, 2003 – True to the pledge to convene public hearings from the southern border counties to the Upper Peninsula, Sen. Cameron S. Brown announced today that a task force examining statewide recycling and Michigan's bottle return law will hold its final hearing in Sault Ste. Marie.

The Michigan Beverage Container and Recycling Task Force, chaired by Brown, will meet on Monday, July 28 at the Chippewa County Courthouse, 319 Court St., from 7 to 9 p.m.

"We've made significant progress and have learned a great deal from citizens across the state," said Brown, R-Fawn River Township. "Because of these hearings there is now greater dialogue on this issue from both the business sector and environmental groups."

Sen. Jason Allen will be the host senator for the Sault Ste. Marie hearing. Rep. Scott Shackleton, R-Sault Ste. Marie, also plans to attend.

"I am very excited to see the Task Force hold a public hearing in the Soo," said Allen, R-Traverse City. "This hearing is the best way for citizens and business owners to have their voice heard regarding local and statewide recycling and the current bottle deposit law. "I encourage anyone interested in this issue to attend this hearing and look forward to talking with area residents in my district."

The task force has prompted several groups to work together on recycling efforts. In June, the Michigan Environmental Council (MEC), the Michigan Recycling Partnership (MRP) and the Michigan United Conservation Clubs (MUCC) agreed to a set of six principles they believe would, "boost the state's recycling rate and strengthen its litter control efforts."

"The formation of the Senate Beverage Container and Recycling Task Force prompted discussions among members of our organizations," said James Clift, policy director for the MEC.

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“We have committed to work together and assist the Task Force in determining the best recycling models and how we might be able to put them into place in Michigan,” said Mary Dechow, government relations director for Spartan Stores and MRP chair.

Former state Rep. Bill Bobier, legislative liaison for the MUCC, said, “Though we didn’t agree on all counts, we all agree Michigan can do a better job on recycling.

“We all recognize that with a better organized statewide effort, we could get enhanced citizen participation in recycling.”

The event wraps up a series of nine hearings the task force has held across the state. Other hearings have been held in Adrian, Coldwater, Gaylord, Grand Rapids, Lansing, Oakland County, Port Huron, and Saginaw.

The task force is responsible for reviewing Michigan’s current recycling program and Beverage Container Law. The task force will issue a final report on suggestions to improve statewide recycling to the Legislature in September. Despite being one of only 12 states with a bottle return law, Michigan’s recycling rate ranks 28th in the nation, according to the MEC.

Task Force members include Sen. Brown; Sen. Patricia Birkholz, R-Saugatuck; Sen. Mike Bishop, R-Rochester; Sen. Alan Cropsey, R-DeWitt; Sen. Jud Gilbert, R-Algonac and Sen. Wayne Kuipers, R-Holland.